



A Legacy of Giving

The Del Mar Foundation has been finding new ways to help the community and its residents since 1982.

Nestled among two square miles of beautiful Southern California coastline is the community of Del Mar. Incorporated in 1959 and residing among saltwater lagoons, Del Mar has a quality that inspires a certain fondness, not only because of its enchanting scenery but because of the kindness of the people who live there.

Del Mar embraces and promotes philanthropy as a way of life. Its oldest philanthropic organization, the Del Mar Foundation (DMF), has contributed and promoted this tradition for more than 30 years.

Founded in 1982 as a 501c3 nonprofit corporation, “the foundation was established to carry on with and grow the work of dedicated individuals who could see the benefit of a formal organization,” says its executive director, Karen Wilson. “Over the years, it has served as an incubator for a number of other Del Mar nonprofits, including Del Mar Community Connections and Friends of the Powerhouse.”

The overall mission of the foundation is to “promote civic pride and cohesiveness, acquire and preserve open space, improve beaches and parklands, raise and grant funds, and sponsor diverse cultural programs and community events in Del Mar.”

It operates as a hybrid organization, initiating

fundraising activities, providing grants to the community and organizing activities designed to inform, inspire and include all age groups – from Easter egg hunts, parades and toddler playgroups to a summer concert series and DMF Talks, a free speaker’s series.

The foundation also engages the community through its grant program. Last year, the foundation helped manage and fund the restoration of the mosaic library wall, an iconic Del Mar structure created by local artist Betsy Schulz and gardening celebrity Pat Welsh – who, together with many volunteers, brought it back to its former glory.

The group recently granted \$20,000 to the San Dieguito River Valley Conservancy to help fund the construction of Birdwing, an open air classroom structure where people can learn about the river and the preservation of the sensitive natural resources and habitat of the area, which will someday extend from the beach area in Del Mar to Volcan Mountain north of Julian.

“Grants are a very important part of our organization and we offer them on a year-round basis,” says Wilson. “Our mission statement guides our decision-making in terms of selecting grant recipients. This year, grant amounts have ranged from about \$2,000 to \$20,000, depending

Above: **SUN, SURF AND SAFETY:** Part of The Del Mar’s mission is to improve beaches and parklands, and enhance beach safety resources.

on the project. The foundation supports organizations in other ways as well, by providing organizational fundraising and marketing expertise, seed money for fundraising, and fiscal management of projects. We encourage individuals and organizations in Del Mar to contact us with either exploratory ideas or concrete projects.”

Wilson says DMF is successful because of the people who contribute to it.

“We have 15 board members – all volunteers – who live in Del Mar and give substantially in both time and money to the organization. At least two board members serve on each of our nine committees, providing professional skills and specialized knowledge ranging from financial and legal expertise to marketing and event management,” she says. “Our board members are a hands-on bunch who really know how to make things happen. This is a very committed group of individuals who care tremendously about Del Mar.”

Given that Del Mar is a beach community, the foundation’s interests naturally include contributions to beach safety resources. “In the past few months, we funded special dive equipment for the Del Mar Lifeguards to aid them in search and rescue operations,” Wilson says. DMF also provided significant funding to the new Lifeguard Tower and Beach Safety Center, provided scholarships to the Junior Lifeguard program, funded beach access bike racks, and donated funds towards the purchase of Del Mar Shores Park.

Taking care of seniors and veterans is another priority – the foundation partially funded a lunch program for elderly residents through Del Mar Community Connections. “This program helps prevent isolation and enhances lives through good nutrition and invigorating speakers. We also funded two beach wheelchairs, in addition to the ones purchased last summer, which will enable even more veterans access to our beaches and the ocean through the Wounded Warriors program,” says Wilson. DMF also contributed to the Del Mar Community Connections computer lab for seniors.

None of this would be possible without ongoing commitment from board members and volunteers, and the

incredible generosity of the community, she notes.

Most of the funding the Del Mar Foundation receives comes from individuals who contribute on an annual basis, or who pledge to donate over four years. Some individual contributions are made specifically to grants and programs that are significant to the individual donor.

Year-end contributions fund the majority of DMF’s annual programs. “The foundation has had a positive, long term impact on the quality of life in our community. It has taken many years, many board members, many volunteers and a lot of financial commitment from hundreds of individual Del Marians to make this happen,” says Wilson.

In 2007, the foundation took steps to ensure that its work would continue into the future. “A group of forward-thinking board members began discussing the idea of establishing a permanent community endowment. It received tremendous support from the beginning by over 50 individuals and families – our Founding Endowment Circle – who committed between \$10,000 and \$50,000 to create the fund.”

A second fund drive, the 30th Anniversary Campaign, was established in 2011. Together, these campaigns have raised more than \$1 million dollars and will ensure funding stability for years to come. “The Del Mar Foundation Community Endowment is meant to provide sustaining income for operations and grant making,” explains Wilson. “We want to keep the good work going.”

Donations to DMF can be made online at www.delmarfoundation.org, or by calling the office at (858) 635-1363. ■

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FUN FOR ALL: The Del Mar Foundation funds and organizes a variety of community events, from Easter egg hunts, parades and toddler playgroups to a summer concert series and a free speaker’s series.